

OUR OMNIPOTENT LEADER

NO. 2465

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 17, 1896
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 29, 1886

*“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”
Matthew 28:18*

I INTEND chiefly to call your attention to this verse, but it will be necessary also to refer to the rest of the chapter, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen”

Our Savior was always with His disciples until the time of His death. After His resurrection He was with them often, but not always. He came and He went mysteriously, the doors being shut, He was suddenly there when they least looked for him, or He appeared to them as they walked by the way, or while they were fishing, or when they came to the mountain in Galilee, the appointed rendezvous.

On this particular occasion—I am not quite sure whether it was when only the eleven were gathered together, or that more memorable occasion when He spoke to over five hundred brethren at once, which many who have well studied the passage think is more probable—at any rate, on this occasion, the Savior made Himself very much at home with His disciples.

According to the most proper translation of the text, “Jesus came and talked unto them.” There was a holy familiarity in His communications with His disciples, He spoke to them as a friend, He came into close contact with them in friendliest familiarity. The glory of that time to them was that He was there, and that He spoke with them. It does not matter where it was, He was there, and wherever He pleases to be the center of the group, there is sure to be a memorable gathering.

Brethren, I wish that we were ever on the lookout for our Lord. I am afraid that in our assemblies we often think and say, “So-and-so was there, and such and such a minister spoke to us,” but the best meeting is when Christ is there, and when He Himself by His Divine Spirit speaks familiarly to our souls.

Notice what it was about which our Lord spoke to His disciples. He was going away from them, His bodily presence would no longer be enjoyed by His followers until He should so come in like manner as they were to see Him go up into heaven, but His last talk, or one of the last talks He ever had with them before His ascension, was about Himself and His work.

It was a time of taking them into His secret, explaining to them the partnership which the Father had established between Him and them, and making them to know the fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ which was now to cover the whole of their lives.

You see, He begins by speaking to them about His own power, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” We are not fit to go out to work for Christ till we truly know Him ourselves, and also know something of the divine power which He is prepared to give to us. It is well for us to learn the lesson ourselves before we attempt to teach it to others. Go not you out unto all nations till you have first gone into your closet and had fellowship with the Master Himself, you will blunder in your errand unless you go forth fresh from His blessed presence.

Then, what were they to do but to act for Him? “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.” They were to teach those nations only about Him, He was to be the great subject of all their teaching. The correct word is, “disciple all nations.” They were to disciple them, not to make them their own disciples, but His

disciples, He was to be still the Teacher, the Rabbi, the Master, they were only to go forth to do His work, not their own.

Brothers, we must not try to form a party of which we shall be the head, we must abhor the very thought of any such action. We must gather the nations unto Him, otherwise, we are not His servants, we are our own servants, or rather, our own masters. We are renegades and disloyal if we do that. “Go ye therefore, and disciple all nations,” was the command of Jesus Christ to His disciples.

And they were to baptize those who were made disciples, but it was to be in His name, in association with that of the Father and of the Holy Ghost. He who is not, as a believer, baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, is not baptized at all, the name of Christ is inseparably linked with those who are baptized according to the Scriptural fashion. So, you see, whether it be preaching, or whether it be discipling, or whether it be baptizing, we must keep close to Christ. It is all along that line, we preach Him, we make disciples for Him, we baptize in His name.

And when those who were made disciples were baptized, what was next to be done? “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” The shepherding of the sheep must still be in our Lord’s name. We do not found a church in any other name but His, neither do we know any rule or order or book of discipline but that which He has left us. He alone is King in Zion, and only what He teaches is authoritative. The explanations given by His servants we must judge by the tests He has given to us, but the word of the Master is to be obeyed and accepted in its entirety. “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

O brothers and sisters, there is no true work done for Christ unless we always put Him in His right place, and keep ourselves in our right places—Himself the omnipotent Leader and Commander of His people, and ourselves His servants in all things, seeking even in the smallest matters to be obedient to His revealed will.

Do not fail to notice that all this is to be done in association with Himself, “Lo, I am with you always.” “It is not enough that you preach My Gospel, and baptize in My name, and teach all nations that I am the Lord and Master of the house, and bid them all obey My will, but you must also ever have Me at your side. You will do nothing worth doing, you will spend your life in failure, unless you keep up perpetual communion with me. ‘Lo, I am with you always.’”

This must be the case with us till this dispensation closes, and it shall only close by our being with Christ in a still higher sense. We shall then go from His being with us to our being with Him, from spiritual fellowship to an actual, visible, corporeal fellowship. We shall be like Him when we shall see Him as He is. He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, He shall reign among His ancients gloriously, and until then, it is our privilege to abide at His side, and never venture to go forth except we feel that He goes with us, making our preaching and teaching in His name to be of effect upon the hearts and consciences of men.

I have missed my purpose in this preface if I have not brought out this line of thought—that if any of us would receive a commission for Christian service, it must come from Christ Himself, if we would carry out that commission, it must be in loyalty *to* Christ, and if we hope to succeed in that commission, it must be in a perpetual, personal fellowship with Christ. We must begin to work with Him and go on working with Him, and never cease to work until He Himself shall come to discharge us from the service because there is no further need of it.

Oh, that we did all our Church work in the name of the great Head of the church! Oh, that we did all Christ’s work consciously in the presence and in the strength of Christ!

Still only introducing my main theme, I shall ask you for a minute or so to consider the grand statement which our Savior made, “Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

“All power.” Read it, if you like, “all authority.” It is not so much force that is meant, as moral power. Christ at this moment possesses a royal authority—by might, it is true, but chiefly by right. His is the power which comes of His merits, of His glorious nature, and of the gift of the Divine Spirit who

rests upon Him without measure. The word we translate “power” has a wider meaning than that, you find a good instance of it in John 1:12, “As many as received him, to them gave he *power* to become the sons of God,” where the word “power” might be rendered “privilege” or “right” or “liberty,” and yet be correctly translated “power” also.

Christ at this moment has all rights in heaven and in earth, He has all sovereignty and dominion, and of course, He has all the might which backs up His right, but it is not mere power in the sense of force, it is not the dynamite power in which earthly kings delight, it is another and a higher kind of force which Christ has, even the divine energy of love. He possesses at this moment all authority in heaven and in earth.

“All power,” He says, “is given unto me,” that is to say, He has it now. You and I are not sent out to preach the Gospel in order to get power for Christ, He has it now. We are not sent out, as we sometimes say, to win the world for Christ, in the strictest sense, it is His now. He is the King of glory at this very moment, He is even now Lord over all, King of kings and Lord of lords, all authority *is* given unto Him. I shall not try to explain the particular time when it was given, but I remind you that it has been given.

That great act is accomplished, our Lord Jesus holds in His hand the scepter which gives Him power over all flesh that He may give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him. He has already in His hand that scepter with which He shall break the nations as with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces as a potter’s vessel. He has not to go up to His throne, He is already enthroned. He has not to be crowned, He is already crowned, as we have said, King of kings and Lord of lords.

“All power is given unto me.” This is not merely the power which Christ possesses naturally by His Godhead, or a power which could be compassed entirely by His manhood, for that must necessarily be limited, but it is a power which can be contained within that blessed complex Person, the Christ of God. It is as the God-man, the Mediator between God and men, that all might is bestowed upon Him as the reward of the travail of His soul, boundless authority, so that now He can say, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

All power “in Heaven” belongs to Christ, that is, all power with God. You remember how Elias prayed, and opened heaven by his prayers, but the Christ of God is greater than Elias. You know how men of God have been blessed with remarkable force and energy in their pleadings, but the intercessions of Christ are more powerful than all the intercessions of His people, yea, in one sense, they are the power that gives effect to all the intercessions of all the saints. It is He who puts power into them and into their petitions. Of course, as Christ has power with God, He has power also over all the holy angels, and all pure intelligences, all power of every kind that has to do with heavenly things and heavenly places is in the hand of Christ.

And Christ has all power also “on earth.” That is to say, He is Lord over all the earth. “The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.” He is Master of all providences, His hand ever holds the helm, and steers the ship that carries His disciples. He is Master of all kings and of all politics, and when at times we tremble for our beloved nation, there is no real need for us to do so. “The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.”

Christ has all authority over all the sons of men and all the forges of nature. From the stars that light up the brow of midnight, to the deepest law that works in the bowels of the earth, the Lord Jesus Christ is Master of them all. All power, He says, is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. This is a statement which would need a far fuller explanation than I can give it in the time at my disposal just now, I want rather to make use of it in this way.

I. First of all, let me say of this statement of our Lord—“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”—that WE GREATLY REJOICE IN IT.

I do not know that our Divine Master could have said anything to us that would have made our hearts thrill with a sweeter delight than we derive from these words—“All power is given unto me.”

Beloved, do you not wish all power to be given to *Him whom we love*? I confess that nothing makes me rejoice more than the fact that He reigneth. I do not feel any sorrow so much as the sorrow of seeing

His truth trodden in the mire, and I know no joy that ever thrills my soul like that of knowing that still is Jesus set as King upon the holy hill of Zion, that still He reigns, and that “He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his footstool.”

Is there any power you would like to keep back from Him? Is there any power you would like to invest in someone else? Is it not the delight of your soul to think that He could say, even when He dwelt here among men, ere yet He had ascended to the Father, while yet He talked as others talked with His poor disciples, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”? Do we not feel ready to shout, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” when we know that this is really the fact?

We delight also, dear friends, to know that all power is in the hands of Christ, because we are sure that *it will be rightly used*. Power in the hands of some people is dangerous, but power in the hands of Christ is blessed. Oh, let Him have all power! Let Him do what He will with it, for He cannot will anything but that which is right, and just, and true, and good.

Give Him unbounded sovereignty. We want no limited monarchy when Christ is King, no, put every crown on that dear head, and let Him have unrestricted sway, for there is none like Him. He is more glorious than all the sons of men, and it is our joy to know that all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth.

This also furnishes us with *good reasons for often going to Him*. I love to think that all power is in Him, and none in me, for now I cannot stay away from Him. I am obliged to knock at His door, and if He asks me why I come so often, I must answer, “It cannot be helped, my Lord, for all power is with thee. If I had power to provide for myself, I might try to do so, but since, without You, I would die of hunger, I must come to You for every bit and every sup, ay, for every breath and every pulse.”

Yes, it is even so, because all power is given unto Christ, we rejoice that we may always go to Him. Will you chide a babe because it longs for its mother’s breast? How can it live without its natural nourishment? And can you chide our feebleness because it loves to hang upon the omnipotence of Christ?

We are glad, again, that all power is given unto Him, because *He is so easy of access*. It is difficult for those in need to speak with kings, but it is not difficult for them to tell their wants to the King of kings. It is not easy to present a petition to an earthly prince, but it is very different with those who have requests to bring to the Prince Immanuel, His door is always open to suppliants, and His ear and heart are always ready to listen to their supplications. Call upon Him when you will, He will never repel you. Come to His strength whenever you may, that strength will flow out to your weakness, and make you strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

I leave that first thought with you, we rejoice that all power is given to Christ.

II. Secondly, WE SEE THE PRACTICAL OUTCOME OF THIS TRUTH, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. *Go ye therefore.*”

I have met with some brethren who have tried to read the Bible the wrong way upwards. They have said, “God has a purpose which is certain to be fulfilled, therefore we will not budge an inch. All power is in the hands of Christ, therefore we will sit still,” but that is not Christ’s way of reading the passage. It is, “All power is given unto me, *therefore go ye*, and do something.” “But Lord, what do You want from us when You have all power? We are such poor, insignificant, useless creatures that we shall be sure to make a muddle of anything we attempt.” “No,” says the Master, “all power is given unto me, *therefore go ye.*”

He puts us on the go because He has all power. I know that with many of us there is a tendency to sit down and say, “All things are wrong, the world gets darker and darker, and everything is going to the bad.” We sit and fret together in most delightful misery, and try to cheer each other downwards into greater depths of despair! Do we not often act thus? Alas! it is so, and we feel happy to think that other people will blend in blessed harmony of misery with us in all our melancholies, or if we do stir ourselves a little, we feel that there is not much good in our service, and that very little can possibly come of it.

This message of our Master seems to me to be something like the sound of a trumpet. I have given you the strains of a dulcimer, but now there rings out the clarion note of a trumpet. Here is the power to enable you to “go.” Therefore, “go” away from your dunghills, away from your ashes and your dust. Shake yourselves from your melancholy. The bugle calls, “Boot and saddle! Up and away!” The battle has begun, and every good soldier of Jesus Christ must be to the front for his Captain and his Lord. Because all power is given unto Christ, He passes on that power to His people, and sends them forth to battle and to victory.

Yet is there another note in this trumpet call. “All power is given unto me, go ye therefore”—“Go ye.” Who is to go out of that first band of disciples? Is it Peter, the rash and the headstrong? Is it John, who sometimes wishes to call fire from heaven to destroy men? Is it Philip, with whom the Savior has been so long, and yet he has not known Him? Is it Thomas, who must put His finger into the print of the nails or he will not believe Him?

Yet the Master says to them, “Go ye; ‘all power is given unto me, therefore go ye.’ You are as good for My purpose as anybody else would be. There is no power in you, I know, but then all power is in Me, therefore go ye. Go, thou worm Jacob, and thresh the mountains, for I have made thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth. Go in all your weakness, for this is your might—the might that dwells in Me. Go ye and teach all nations. Poor, weak, feeble, faulty, yet go ye because I have all the power you can possibly want.”

“Go, go ye,” says Christ. “But Lord, if we go to men, *they will ask for our passports.*” “Take them,” says He, “‘all authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth.’ You are free of heaven, and you are free of earth. There is no place—whether it be in far off Ethiopia, or in the deserts of Scythia, or in the center of Rome—there is no place where you may not go. There are your passports, ‘All authority is given unto me, therefore go ye.’”

“But Lord, we need more than passports, *we need a commission.*” “Here is your commission,” says the Lord, ‘all power is given unto me,’ and I delegate it to you. I have authority and I give you authority, go ye therefore because I have the authority. Go and teach princes and kings and beggars, teach them all alike. I ordain you, I authorize you, as many of you as know Me, and have My love shed abroad in your hearts, I commission you to go and—

***“Tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found;”***

“and if they ask how you dare to do it, tell them not that the bishop ordained you, or that a synod licensed you, but that all power is given to your Master in heaven and in earth, and you have come in His name, and nobody may say you nay.”

“Moreover,” says the Master, “*I send you with My power gone before you*” Observe that, for I bring it again to your recollection. Christ does not say, “Go and win the power for Me on earth, go and get power for Me among the sons of men.” No, but “All authority and power are already vested in Me, go ye therefore. I send you to a country which is not an alien kingdom, I send you to a country which is Mine, for all souls are Mine. If you go to the Jews or to the Gentiles, they are Mine, if it is to India or China that you go, you need not ask any man’s leave, you are in your own King’s country, you are on your own King’s errand, you have your own King’s power going before you.”

I do believe that often, when missionaries go to a country, they have rather to gather ripe fruit than to plant trees. As the Lord sent the hornets to clear the way for the children of Israel, so does He oftentimes send singular changes, political, social, and religious, before the heralds of the cross, to prepare the way for them, and this is the message which sounds with clear clarion note to all the soldiers of King Jesus, “I have all authority in heaven and in earth, therefore, without misgivings or questionings, go ye and evangelize all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Thus, first, we rejoice in this grand statement of our Lord Jesus Christ, and next, we see the practical outcome of it.

III. Thirdly, and very briefly, WE FEEL THE NEED OF IT.

Oh, brothers and sisters, if anybody in this place knows the power which is in Christ to make his ministry of any use, I am sure that I do! I scarcely ever come into this pulpit without bemoaning myself that ever I should be called to a task for which I seem more unfit than any other man that was ever born. Woe is me that I should have to preach a Gospel which so overmasters me, and which I feel that I am so unfit to preach! Yet I could not give it up, for it were a far greater woe to me not to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Unless the Holy Ghost blesses the Word, we who preach the Gospel are of all men most miserable, for we have attempted a task that is impossible, we have entered upon a sphere where nothing but the supernatural will ever avail. If the Holy Spirit does not renew the hearts of our hearers, we cannot do it. If the Holy Ghost does not regenerate them, we cannot. If He does not send the truth home into their souls, we might as well speak into the ear of a corpse.

All that we have to do is quite beyond our unaided power, we must have our Master with us, or we can do nothing. We deeply feel our need of this great truth, we not merely say it, but we are driven every day, by our own deep sense of need, to rejoice that our Lord has declared, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," for we need all power. Every kind of power that there is in heaven and in earth we shall need before we can fully discharge this ministry.

Before the nations shall all be brought to hear the Gospel of Christ, before testimony to Him shall be borne in every land, we shall need the whole omnipotence of God, we shall want every force in heaven and earth before this is done. Thank God that this power is all laid by ready for our use, the strength that is equal to such a stupendous task as this is already provided.

IV. I must pass over much that I might have dwelt upon, and say, in the next place, WE BELIEVE THIS TEXT, AND WE REST IN IT. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

We believe in this power, and we rest in it. *We do not seek any other power.* There is a craving often, after great mental power, people want "clever" men to preach the Gospel. Ah, sirs! I fear that the Gospel has suffered more damage from clever men than from anything else, I question whether the devil himself has ever wrought so much mischief in the church of God as clever men have done. No, we want to have such mental vigor as God pleases to give us, but we remember that text, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD."

The world is not going to be saved by worldly wisdom or by fine oratory, brilliant speeches and poetic periods win not souls for Christ. The power to do this is the power that is in Christ, and the church of God, when she is in her right senses, does not look for any other power, I mean, that she does not cringe before kings and princes, and cry, "Establish us, endow us."

It is an old fiction that the royal touch can cure "the king's evil," but it is an old fact that the king's hand brings an evil whenever it is laid upon the church of Christ by way of patronage. No, kings and queens, we can do without you! If you will come to Jesu's feet as humble suppliants, you shall be saved even as your subjects are, but the church of God has a kingdom that is not of this world, and wants no help whatever from the kingdoms of this world.

All power for the extension of the kingdom of Christ is in Himself, His own person sustains His own kingdom, and we will not go to any other fountain of authority to draw the power we need. The church of Christ must ever say to Him, "All my fresh springs are in thee."

And dear friends, we believe and rest in this truth, *defying every other power.* Every other power that can be conceived of may set itself against the kingdom of Christ, but it does not matter, nay, not one whistle of the wind, for all power is already in Christ, and that which seems to oppose His kingdom must be but the mere empty name of power. There can be no real power about it, for all power is in Him both in heaven and in earth.

This being so, we rest quite sure that *even our infirmities will not hinder the progress of His kingdom*, nay, rather, we glory in our infirmities, for now the power of Christ will become more conspicuous. The less we have by which the kingdom might be supposed to be extended, the more clearly will it be seen that the kingdom is extended by the power of the King Himself.

At the same time, *all power that we have we give to Him*, because all power is His, and all power that we ever possess, we lay it under tribute for Him. Whatever is of good, or of brightness, or of light, or of knowledge in this world, we say, “It all belongs to Jesus,” and we set the broad arrow of our great King upon it, and claim it as His.

O dear friends, why are we ever cast down? Why do we ever begin to question the ultimate success of the good cause? Why do we ever go home with aching head and palpitating heart because of the evils of the day? Courage, my brethren, courage, the King has all power, it is impossible to defeat Him. A standard bearer fell just now, I know, and across the battlefield I see the clouds of smoke. The right wing of our army may be shattered for a moment, but the King in the center of the host still rides upon the white horse of victory, and He has but to will it, He has but to speak a single word, and the enemy shall be driven away like chaff before the wind.

V. Lastly, and here I should have liked to have had much time, but I can only hint at what I would have said. If it be so that all authority is given to Christ in heaven and in earth, then WE MUST OBEY IT.

Christ says, “Go.” Then, *let us go at once*, according to His Word, in the track which God’s own hand marks out for us. Let us go and disciple all nations, let us tell them that they are to learn of Christ, and that they are to be obedient to His will. Let us also baptize those who become His disciples, as He bids us do, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Next, *let us be loyal to Him in all things*, and let us train up His disciples in loyalty to Him, “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” As He has all authority, let us not intrude another authority. Let us keep within the Master’s house, and seek to know the Master’s mind, to learn the Master’s will, to study the Master’s Book, and to receive the Master’s Spirit, and let these be dominant over all other power, and all the while let us endeavor to keep in fellowship with Him, “Lo, I am with you always.”

Let us never go away from Him. Because all authority is given unto Him, let us keep close by His side, let us be the yeomen of His guard. Let us be the servants who unloose the latches of His shoes, who bring water for His feet, and who count ourselves highly honored thereby. “Lo, I am with you always,” saith He, so let us always be with Him.

And let us always keep *expecting Him to return*. The last words of the chapter suggest this thought, “even unto the end of the world,” or “of the age.” You know that this age is to end with a glorious beginning of a brighter and better age, therefore let us keep looking for it.

Servants, you will not serve well unless you expect your Master’s return. If you say, “He delayeth his coming,” you may begin to eat, and to drink, and to be drunken, and to beat your fellow servants. Let the expectation of your Lord’s return always keep you on tiptoe, with your lamps trimmed and your lights burning, for perhaps this very night there may be heard in our streets the cry, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.” May we all be so ready that this cry would be the sweetest music that our ears could ever hear! God bless you, beloved, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—775, 340, 324

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

COLOSSIANS I

Verses 1-2. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul begins with a salutation in which he wishes the Colossian Christians the best of all blessings. It is the very spirit of our holy religion to wish well to others, and I am sure that we cannot have a better wish for our dearest friends than this, “Grace be unto you, and peace.” Grace will save you, peace will make you know that you are saved.

Grace is the root of every blessing, peace is the sweet flower that makes life so sweet and so fragrant. May you have both of these blessings “from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”! There is no peace for you apart from this blessed combination, God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, may you know your adoption, and may you know your redemption!

3-4. *We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus,—*

We are not only to pray for those who have no faith, but the very fact that men have faith should lead us to pray for them. Where there is evidently life in the seed, and it begins to sprout, let us water it with our prayers, and with our thanks too. “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus,”—

4-5. *And of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;*

“Faith”—“love”—“hope”—these are three divine sisters which should always go hand in hand. We must never be satisfied unless we see in ourselves and in our fellow Christians these three delightful fruits of the Spirit of God. Notice the order here—faith, and love, and then hope. Perhaps the Colossians were a little deficient in this last grace, so the apostle prayed constantly for them, “for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.”

6. *Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:*

We do not know the grace of God in truth unless it brings forth fruit in us. We may know it with the head very correctly, but yet we do not truly know it unless it is knowledge in the heart, knowledge in the inner man. We do not really know it unless it affects our lives, and brings forth faith, love, hope—faith, which lifts us above the world; love, which preserves us from selfishness; and hope, which keeps us up under all trials.

7-8. *As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.*

I like to read of these godly men speaking well of one another. Nowadays it is thought to be a distinguishing mark of faithfulness to be able to pick holes in the coats of our fellow Christians. Now, we cannot help perceiving their defects, and sometimes it is our duty to speak of them, and to speak of them faithfully, but let us also observe all the virtues that are to be found in them, otherwise we may despise the work of the Holy Spirit, and rob Him of His glory. How kindly Paul speaks of Epaphras, and how kindly Epaphras speaks of the church at Colosse!

9. *For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;*

If you have the graces of the Spirit, it is important that they should be deepened, that they should grow through being fed with divine nourishment. What the water is to the plant, making it further to develop itself, that is the knowledge of God’s will to our gifts and graces, they grow and become fruitful through an increase in the knowledge of God.

10-14. *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks to the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of*

darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Now the apostle is handling the string he most delights to touch. He is at home with everything which concerns the welfare of saints, but when he begins to talk of his Lord and Master, then it is that he seems to ride in a chariot of fire with horses of fire, and he grows mightily eloquent under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. See how he talks of the great central truth of the atoning sacrifice, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

15-18. *Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body,—*

Note how Paul harps upon that one string, “He.” See how much He dwells upon the divine person of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He will never have done praising Him, he keeps on heaping up epithets to magnify that blessed name, and he truly was in the Spirit of God when he did this, for it is the work of the Spirit to glorify Jesus Christ. He makes Him great in our hearts, and then we try to make him great by our words and by our acts.

18-22. *The church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight:*

O beloved! as the sun is to be seen mirrored, not only in the face of the great deep, but in every little drop of dew that hangs upon each blade of grass, so is the glory of Christ to be seen, not only in His universal church, but in every separate individual in whom His Spirit has wrought holiness.

23. *If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;*

How delighted he is to have such a Gospel to preach, such a hope to tell out to the sons of men! Oh, if we had to creep from a sick bed, or to come up from a dungeon, if we were aching in every bone of our body, and if we were depressed in soul, this ought to be enough to make us full of gladness to overflowing, that we have such a Christ to preach, and such fullness of blessing to declare to the sons of men!

24. *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:*

As if there were so much suffering to be endured to bring in the redeemed from the world, and so much self-sacrifice to be made in order that those whom Christ has redeemed may come to know of that redemption, and may be brought to Him, and Paul was glad to make up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh, “for his body's sake, which is the church”—

25. *Whereof I am made a minister,—*

This is a wonderful expression, “made a minister.” The true minister is of God's making, a man-made minister must be a poor creature, but a God-made minister will prove his calling, “whereof I am made a minister,”—

25-27. *According to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

“Christ in you” is glory begun, a sure pledge and earnest of a glory greater than you can yet conceive. If Christ be in you, you have the beginnings of heaven, you have, in fact, the excellence and flower of heaven, for there is no heaven but the glory of Christ.

28-29. *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*

If God’s people strive mightily, it is because God works mightily in them. Nothing can come out of a man but what God puts into him. We work to will and to do when He works in us according to His good pleasure. Oh, for more of the agonizing of the Spirit within us, that there might be more of agonizing in our spirits for the glory of God!

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.